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28 February 1956

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STAFF

MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED]

SUBJECT : OTR Revision of Paper on Brainwashing From A Psychological Viewpoint

1. In response to a request from the DCI for a paper on brainwashing which could be classified Confidential and made available to certain representatives of foreign governments, the AME Staff of OTR has revised its paper of June 1955. Included in this revision are certain portions of the [REDACTED] study which is currently being circulated in the DD/P in the form of a working draft. Owing to pressure of time, the AME Staff did not coordinate the draft of their revision with TSS [REDACTED] prior to submitting it for reproduction. We have just obtained a copy of the AME/OTR draft, and after reviewing it, we believe that the Director should be advised of certain overstatements in it.

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2. We realize that the purpose of this particular paper is to dramatize to a certain extent the nefariousness of Communist brainwashing practices. It should be noted, however, that none of the individuals studied by the TSS Group--including the so-called "most thoroughly brainwashed" cases--underwent the change in personality implied by the OTR definition of brainwashing. That is, most of the individuals studied by us had experienced a tremendous loss of perspective under the Communist treatment, and they had acquired certain false beliefs they would not normally have held. However, we observed no permanent or even lasting change in their personality structure. There was a definite and serious reduction of their ability to look critically at the stuff the Communists were indoctrinating them with, but in no sense were their "critical faculties" totally destroyed, as suggested by the OTR paper.

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3. It is our belief that every effort should be made to protect over dramatized statements of this sort from getting into the public press in this country. We emphasize again that some official public statement coordinated by all the agencies concerned with the problem of "brainwashing" should be made in the near future. Such a statement should not underplay the nefariousness and inhumanity of Communist methods, but it should explode

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the idea that there is anything mysterious or scientific about the Communist techniques beyond ordinary police practices which would not be condoned in a democratic country. We urge that whatever impetus the Agency can provide be exerted toward coordinating and publishing such a public statement.

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APPROVED:

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Chief, TSS, [REDACTED]

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